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## **Intergenerational transmission of maternal and paternal parenting beliefs: The moderating role of interaction quality**

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**Abstract:** The finding that values, attitudes, and behaviour can be transmitted across generations is long standing. However, the role of fathers in this process has been underinvestigated. Furthermore, many researchers have not tested moderation effects. We extended the literature by investigating maternal and paternal transmission of harsh parenting beliefs to their children 23 years later. Furthermore, we examined the moderating role of interaction quality and included gender and socioeconomic status as control variables. Our data were collected in a unique longitudinal study of 128 families across 23 years. We found high positive associations between the harsh parenting beliefs of parents and their adult children, but only the mother-child transmissions were moderated by interaction quality. Mothers pass on low levels as well as high levels of harsh parenting beliefs to their children if their interaction quality is poor. These findings highlight the importance of investigating intergenerational transmission in both mother-child and father-child dyads.

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Running head: TRANSMISSION OF PARENTING BELIEFS

Intergenerational Transmission of Maternal and Paternal Parenting Beliefs:

The Moderating Role of Interaction Quality

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## Abstract

The intergenerational transmission of values, attitudes, and behavior has been long-standing. However, the role of fathers in these processes has been under investigated. Furthermore, many researchers have not tested for moderation effects. We extend the literature by investigating *maternal and paternal* transmission of harsh parenting beliefs to their children 23 years later. Furthermore, we examined the *moderating role of interaction quality* and included gender and socioeconomic status as control variables. The data consisted of a unique longitudinal study of 128 families across 23 years. We found high positive associations between the harsh parenting beliefs of parents and their adult children, but only the mother-child transmissions were moderated by the interaction quality. Mothers pass on their low as well as their high harsh parenting beliefs to their children, if their interaction quality is poor. These findings highlight the importance of investigating intergenerational transmission both for mother-child and father-child dyads.

Keywords: intergenerational transmission, harsh parenting beliefs, longitudinal analysis, father, mother, interaction quality

## Intergenerational Transmission of Maternal and Paternal Parenting Beliefs: The Moderating Role of Interaction Quality

A broad range of literature has revealed the intergenerational transmission of parenting behavior and beliefs. These transmission effects hold for both problematic (Capaldi, Pears, Patterson, & Owen, 2003; Simons, Whitbeck, Conger, & Chyi-in, 1991) and positive parenting (Belsky, Jaffee, Sligo, Woodward, & Silva, 2005; Chen & Kaplan, 2001) as well as

1 for both parenting behavior (Serbin & Karp, 2003) and parenting beliefs (van IJzendoorn,  
2 1992). According to Chen and Kaplan (2001), most research in this field has focused on the  
3 consequences of parenting behavior. Only little research has pointed out the role of cognitions  
4 as one of the determinants of parenting behavior (Simons, Beaman, Conger, & Chao,  
5 1992). Since the 1980s, however, interest in parenting beliefs as one of the antecedents of  
6 parenting behavior has increased notably. Conjoined with parenting behavior are beliefs on  
7 children's learning, beliefs on discipline as well as concepts on the interplay of parenting and  
8 child development. Research showed that parenting behavior links the parenting beliefs of the  
9 parents and their children (Simons et al., 1992). Thus, to understand the transmission of  
10 parenting behaviors between generations, parenting beliefs have to be taken into account. This  
11 longitudinal study addresses this issue by focusing on the intergenerational transmission of  
12 parenting beliefs.

### 14 **Families as the Primary Source of Socialization**

15 Families can be seen as the primary source of socialization as they influence child  
16 development and shape the values and attitudes of their children (Grusec, Goodnow, &  
17 Kuczynski, 2000). Families transmit not only societal values and social norms, but also more  
18 family-specific attitudes, such as parenting styles and beliefs.

19 As Hofferth, Pleck, and Vesely (2012) point out, almost no research has presented a  
20 methodologically rigorous test of the distinct role of fathering compared to mothering in the  
21 investigation of parenting patterns across generations. To date, familial processes have been  
22 investigated by examining maternal influences almost exclusively (Thornberry, Freeman-  
23 Gallant, Lizotte, Krohn, & Smith, 2003; Vermulst, Brock, & van Zutphen, 1991). However,  
24 more recent research has paid increasing attention to the father's role in the family,  
25 investigating the father's relevance to a child's development (Lamb, 2010). Indeed, a small

number of recent studies have shown that fathers transmit their own parenting to the next generation and thus play an increasingly important role in intergenerational familial processes (Hofferth, et al. 2012; Kitamura, Shikai, Uji, Hiramura, Tanaka, et al., 2009; Smith & Farrington, 2004). Fathers might become more and more important as their role in the family has changed substantially during the past 10 to 20 years.

### **Fathers and Harsh Parenting**

Omitting fathers is particularly problematic when studying harsh parenting because research has revealed that fathers are significantly involved in violent parenting (Capaldi et al. 2003; Conger, Neppl, Kim, & Scaramella 2003; Simons et al., 1991; Smith & Farrington, 2004). For example, in the study by Simons et al. (1991), harsh parenting was directly transmitted to the sons of the next generation (G2), but the transmission processes were not differentiated with regard to the gender of the first generation. Conversely, Smith and Farrington (2004) differentiated G1 mothers and fathers but investigated only G2 sons, and therefore did not investigate transmission to G2 daughters. Their results, however, point in the same direction as outlined above. G2 sons who were poorly supervised by their parents in childhood showed inconsistent parenting behavior as adults themselves, inadequately supervising their own children to a higher degree than G2 sons who had not endured such poor parenting experiences in childhood. These findings highlight the importance of fathers and mothers in intergenerational transmission processes in families.

In the research on the role of fathers in transmission of harsh parenting little attention has given to the cognitions behind their parenting behavior, despite beliefs has been pointed out to be an important indicator of future parenting behavior (Chen & Kaplan, 2001). This study fills this gap by investigating mothers and fathers transmission of harsh parenting beliefs to their children.

### **Direct Transmission of Parenting Beliefs**

Among numerous theories explaining intrafamilial transmission processes of characteristics, behaviors, values, and attitudes Bandura's social learning theory (1977) is typically seen as providing the most accurate theoretical foundation (see Hofferth et al., 2012).

Social learning theory emphasizes the importance of parents as role-models, especially in early childhood. Parents act as role-models for their children, who, in turn, learn parenting behaviors, attitudes, and values through observation and imitation. Transmission occurs directly through practice, punishment, or reinforcement (Bandura, 1977). Because families work as the primary source of socialization in childhood an emphasis on early parenting is crucial for testing transmission processes (Kovan, Chung, & Sroufe, 2009). Thus, this study focus on a sample of parents with young children in a sensitive period for parental influences.

To date, in addition to investigating direct transmission research has often investigated *mediated* pathways. Various studies have reported indirect transmission via several mediators such as personality traits or behaviors (e.g., antisocial behavior), positive relationships, conflicted marriages, or social participation in transmission processes (see e.g. Hofferth et al., 2012). However, less is known about *moderators* in intergenerational transmission processes of parenting (Conger, Belsky, & Capaldi, 2009).

### **Moderators in Intergenerational Transmission Processes**

Moderators are seen as potential sources of influence on the intergenerational transmission process of parenting behavior or beliefs. They establish the context in which the

1 intergenerational transmission occurs. Such knowledge is particularly informative for  
2 researchers or professionals working in the field of familial relationships interested in  
3 promoting positive child rearing. With regard to moderators, research on the influence of  
4 gender on the transmission of parenting has shown inconsistent results (Belsky et al., 2005).  
5 Other studies that investigated moderation effects have shown that positive relationships  
6 between parents and children facilitate value transmission. Schönplflug (2001) found that  
7 value transmission in father-son relationships was strongest when fathers displayed an  
8 empathetic, less rigid parenting style. In contrast, Roest, Dubas, and Gerris (2009) found that  
9 a warm and close family climate increased transmission of values only in the mother-child  
10 and not in the father-child dyad.

11       The rationale for testing for the moderating effect of the quality of parent-child  
12 relationships in value transmission research is offered by Grusec and Goodnow (1994) with  
13 their explanation of the different steps toward the internalization of values and behavior. In  
14 their opinion, a prerequisite for adopting parental behavior or beliefs is an *accurate* perception  
15 of the parental position. This may be achieved by a nuanced and clear expression of the  
16 parental view. Second, children need to accept or refuse the positions of their parents (Grusec  
17 & Goodnow, 1994). The likelihood that children will accept their parents' positions is higher  
18 if the family climate is warm and responsive. Therefore, high-quality interactions in parent-  
19 child relationships promote children's efforts to be more similar to their parents and to adopt  
20 their positions (Grusec et al., 2000). Thus, it might be hypothesized that the intergenerational  
21 transmission of harsh parenting beliefs will change depending on the quality of the underlying  
22 parent-child relationship.

## 24                                   **The Present Study**

1        We used a unique data set that consisted of two generations measured across a time  
2 span of 23 years to investigate whether and how harsh parenting beliefs are transmitted across  
3 generations. Not only did we include three sources of information, but we were also able to  
4 avoid retrospective reports by measuring parents' parenting beliefs when their children were 6  
5 years old and then measuring the parenting beliefs of those children in adulthood.

6        Furthermore, we used identical measures of harsh parenting beliefs for the parents and  
7 the adult children 23 years later. According to Simons et al. (1991), it is crucial to differentiate  
8 between discipline and warmth when investigating parenting across generations. In line with  
9 this distinction, we focused more strongly on the aspect of discipline. More specifically, our  
10 study was concerned with harsh parenting beliefs, which we defined as demanding and  
11 controlling parenting characteristics. Such parents show openness to punishment or discipline.  
12 Combined with rejecting, unresponsive, and parent-centered characteristics, harsh parenting  
13 has been conceptualized as authoritarian power-asserting parenting (Baumrind, 1966, 1991;  
14 Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

15        Most importantly, we included maternal and paternal influences in our examination of  
16 transmission processes. Due to increasing societal changes with noticeable consequences not  
17 only for the individual but for the whole family, we argue that research should shift its focus  
18 to a more integrative view of the family, always including mothers *and* fathers when  
19 investigating familial processes. This study extends previous literature in several ways. We  
20 differentiated between mother-child and father-child dyads using a balanced sample of fathers  
21 and mothers when testing the intergenerational transmission of harsh parenting beliefs. With  
22 regard to prior research, we hypothesized that we would find associations for harsh parenting  
23 beliefs in both dyads.

24        Second, to the best of our knowledge, no research has examined the transmission of  
25 *harsh parenting beliefs* by testing for interaction quality as a moderator. Therefore, we tested



whether and how the quality of the interactions between children and their parents would moderate transmission from one generation to the next with regard to harsh parenting beliefs. With regard to prior research, our hypothesis predicted that high interaction quality would increase the transmission of harsh parenting beliefs in both dyads.

## Method

### Sample

Data consisted of 207 Swiss families, including fathers, mothers and one of their children. Randomly selected communal agencies in the German speaking part of Switzerland were asked for the addresses of children, who had been expected for school enrollment in 1984. A total of 1,035 parents of these children were contacted by mailed questionnaires; 445 parents (43%) returned the questionnaires in 1984. Although the sample was selected randomly, we must assume that there was a response bias due to self-selection. Some answers ( $n = 65$ ) were excluded because no panel data could be gathered. Also, some respondents ( $n = 16$ ) were excluded because they were missing all data for a particular construct or they turned in questionnaires with unreliable data (e.g., parents had answered questions together). After correcting the data for these issues, 193 mothers and 171 fathers out of 207 families took part in 1984. One year later, the second measurement wave was conducted, again by mailing questionnaires to the same families who had participated the year before. Maternal and paternal perceptions of their child's development in the first school year and the impact of school enrollment on selected aspects of parent-child relationships were investigated (Stöckli, 1989). In 1985, 194 mothers and 168 fathers of the initial 207 families participated in the questionnaire study. More than 20 years later, a third measurement wave was conducted and questionnaires were sent to fathers, mothers, and the adult child. In 2007, 76.8% of mothers and 68.1% of fathers of the initial 207 families took part in the study; 155 of the former

children, who were then young adults, were interviewed as well (74.9% of the 207 families). The follow-up study in young adulthood examined educational pathways from childhood to adulthood as well as parent-child relationships across the lifespan. This procedure led to a final sample of 128 complete families (each family consisted of a father, a mother, and one child) who participated in this study (Wave 1, 1984: age<sub>mother</sub>:  $M = 35.35$ ,  $SD = 3.92$ ; age<sub>father</sub>:  $M = 37.19$ ,  $SD = 3.85$ ; age<sub>child</sub>:  $M = 6.62$ ,  $SD = 0.49$ ) and children in young adulthood (Wave 3, 2007: age<sub>child</sub>:  $M = 29.14$ ,  $SD = 0.49$ ). 51.6% ( $n = 66$ ) of the children were female.

## Measures

**Harsh parenting beliefs.** This scale consisted of three items (see Table 1 for the wording of the items and the results of a latent confirmatory factor analysis). It was originally created to measure teachers' attitudes toward discipline and control and was later adapted to the familial context (Constance Questionnaire KSE; Koch, Cloetta, & Müller-Fohrbrodt, 1972). Ratings were given on a Likert-type scale with higher values representing more control. The scale for mothers ( $M = 3.19$ ,  $SD = 0.85$ ,  $\alpha = .71$ ) and fathers ( $M = 3.34$ ,  $SD = 0.82$ ,  $\alpha = .68$ ) ranged from 1 to 5 and the scale for adult children from 1 to 6 ( $M = 3.12$ ,  $SD = 1.06$ ,  $\alpha = .71$ ) and showed acceptable internal consistencies.

**Interaction quality.** This scale consisted of four items (see Table 2 for the wording of the items and the results of a latent confirmatory factor analysis). Mothers and fathers indicated how they perceived the quality of their interactions with their children (Stöckli, 1989). After reverse-coding negative worded items, the scale for mothers ( $M = 4.32$ ,  $SD = 0.49$ ,  $\alpha = .69$ ) and fathers ( $M = 4.42$ ,  $SD = 0.45$ ,  $\alpha = .64$ ) ranged from 1 to 5 and showed acceptable internal consistency.

**Socioeconomic status.** Socioeconomic status was measured with the Standard International Socio-Economic Index of Occupational Status (ISEI) (Ganzeboom, de Graf,

Treiman, & DeLeeuw, 1992) for mothers ( $M = 45.08$ ,  $SD = 9.77$ ) and fathers ( $M = 55.15$ ,  $SD = 15.37$ ) separately. To represent family status, we chose the ISEI of the parent possessing the higher one ( $M_{HISEI} = 56.03$ ;  $SD = 13.74$ ;  $N_{Missing} = 13$ , 10.16%).

## Analyses

We examined the research questions by applying latent structural equation modeling using Mplus (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2010). If data on parents' harsh parenting beliefs were missing in 1984, they were imputed from the 1985 data. A high relative stability of parenting beliefs between these 2 years (not presented in this paper) justified this approach. Additionally we used Full Information Maximum Likelihood (Kline, 2011) to estimate any data that were missing with regard to the harsh parenting beliefs of the adult child in 2007 (see Table 1 and 2).

We included the children's gender and socio-economic status as control variables in our analyses. Although often neglected in prior research, socioeconomic status of families explains similarities between generations. We therefore integrated this variable as a control (Serbin & Karp, 2003; Simons et al., 1991; van IJzendoorn, 1992).

First, we tested a latent structural equation model for the transmission of parenting beliefs in mother-child and father-child dyads controlling for the child's gender and the socioeconomic status of the family in childhood (see Table 4, Models 1 and 2). We followed a step-up approach to test for measurement invariance across time (Brown, 2006). Partial strong factorial invariance was established.

Finally, we tested a latent structural equation model that predicted adult children's harsh parenting beliefs from their parents' harsh parenting beliefs more than 2 decades before as well as the parents' self-reported quality of interacting with their child in childhood. We tested this model for both the mother-child (see Table 5, Model 4A) and the father-child dyad

(see Table 6, Model 5A). Additionally we controlled for the socioeconomic status of the family in childhood and for the child's gender (see Table 5, Model 4B, and Table 6, Model 5B). All these models showed good model fit.

We tested the interaction of parental harsh parenting beliefs and the quality of the parental interaction with the child on the adult child's harsh parenting beliefs to test our hypothesis that interaction quality would moderate the transmission of harsh parenting beliefs between generations. Mplus offers the latent moderated structural equations (LMS) method (Klein & Moosbrugger, 2000) to test for interactions. This method provides the advantage that the normal distribution of latent independent variables and error variables is assumed and no product indicator term has to be produced. Furthermore, the nonnormality of the latent product term is taken into account (Klein & Moosbrugger, 2000). Regular model fit indices are not provided in Mplus (Wang & Wang, 2012) because the calculation of the  $\chi^2$  test of goodness of fit asks for a saturated model that cannot be computed. Mplus computes only unstandardized solutions. To obtain standardized results, the manifest indicators of the latent independent variables as well as of the dependent variable were z-transformed. Standardized path coefficients are useful, particularly for investigating the relative impact of the predictors (Henseler & Fassott, 2010).

## Results

For descriptive statistics of the constructs, see Table 3.

To analyze the transmission of harsh parenting beliefs, we first tested mother-child and father-child dyads. Harsh parenting beliefs between mother and child were transmitted with  $\beta = .33$  ( $p < .01$ ). After controlling for the child's gender and the socioeconomic status of the family, transmission in the mother-child dyad still revealed a significant association with  $\beta = .28$  ( $p < .05$ ; see Table 4, Models 1A and 1B). Furthermore, fathers passed on their parenting

beliefs with  $\beta = .35$  ( $p < .01$ ) significantly. This significant association still held after controlling for the child's gender and the socioeconomic status of the family ( $\beta = .35$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Child's gender influenced the adult children's parenting beliefs ( $\beta = .27$ ,  $p < .01$ ) such that men showed more harsh parenting beliefs than women (see Table 4, Models 2A and 2B).

Latent structural equation modeling showed that mothers transmitted harsh parenting beliefs to their children ( $\beta = .34$ ,  $p = .003$ ) across a time period of more than two decades (see Table 5, Model 4A). This transmission increased slightly ( $\beta = .37$ ,  $p = .010$ ) after controlling for children's gender and the socioeconomic status of the family in childhood (see Table 5, Model 4B). The same association was found in father-child dyads: Fathers pass on their harsh parenting beliefs to their children ( $\beta = .36$ ,  $p = .004$ ; see Table 6, model 5A), and this association held after controlling for children's gender and the socioeconomic status of the family in childhood ( $\beta = .39$ ,  $p = .003$ ; see Table 6, Model 5B). Maternal interaction quality with their children did not significantly influence adult children's harsh parenting beliefs (see Table 5, all Models). There was a tendency for fathers' quality of interaction with their children to negatively influence children's harsh parenting beliefs ( $\beta = -.21$ ,  $p = .096$ ; see Table 6) indicating that the children of fathers who had better quality father-child interactions had less harsh parenting beliefs 2 decades later. However, this result did not hold after controlling for both of the control variables (see Table 6, Model 5B). There was a tendency for mothers' harsh parenting beliefs to be negatively associated with mother-child interaction quality ( $r = -.20$ ,  $p = .078$ ; see Table 5, Model 4A, C, D). But fathers' harsh parenting beliefs were not correlated with father-child interaction quality (see Table 6, all Models). In young adulthood, sons showed harsh parenting beliefs to a significantly higher extent than daughters (see all Models).

We tested the moderating role of parental interaction quality with the child. The interaction of mothers' harsh parenting beliefs and the quality of maternal interactions with

1 the child had a significantly negative influence on the harsh parenting beliefs of the adult  
2 child ( $\beta = -.37, p = .042$ ) after controlling for child's gender and the socioeconomic status of  
3 the family in childhood (see Table 5, Model 4D). In relationships characterized by high-  
4 quality interactions, transmission of harsh parenting beliefs between mothers and their  
5 children occurred to a smaller extent; and vice versa, mothers were more likely to pass on  
6 their harsh parenting beliefs in poor-quality relationships. If mothers are high on interaction  
7 quality to their children, no transmission occurs. On the other hand, poor maternal interaction  
8 quality fostered the transmission of harsh parenting beliefs. Children's harsh parenting beliefs  
9 seem to root in their mothers' parenting beliefs but only if interaction quality between mother  
10 and child was poor (see Figure 1). The main effect of interaction quality did not reach  
11 significance level which indicates that interaction quality only becomes relevant in  
12 conjunction with harsh parenting beliefs. The interaction between fathers' harsh parenting  
13 beliefs and interaction quality did not significantly affect the harsh parenting beliefs of the  
14 adult children ( $\beta = -.19, p = .324$ ; see Table 6, Model 5D). Thus, the transmission of harsh  
15 parenting beliefs in father-child dyads did not depend on the quality of this relationship.

## 17 Discussion

18 For a long time, previous research on intergenerational transmission of parenting beliefs  
19 and behaviors has been focusing on mothers. However, some studies revealed that fathers are  
20 often involved in negative parenting patterns and that they are likely to pass on these negative  
21 patterns to their children. Therefore, many researchers called for a closer investigation of the  
22 role of fathers in families. We aimed to fill this research gap by investigating both maternal  
23 and paternal transmission effects of harsh parenting beliefs. We found a positive association  
24 between parenting beliefs of the first and the second generation, even after controlling for  
25 socioeconomic status and gender. Harsh parenting beliefs are passed on to children still more

1 than two decades later. These findings correspond with recent results on transmission  
2 processes found for mothers (Belsky et al., 2005), for fathers (Smith & Farrington, 2004) or  
3 for both (Kitamura et al., 2009; Simons et al., 1992).

4        Additionally, we tested the moderating role of interaction quality for mother-child and  
5 father-child dyads. Our moderator was consequential only for mother-child but not for father-  
6 child dyads. High-quality interactions between mothers and their children did not moderate  
7 the transmission of harsh parenting beliefs, that is, if mothers had a good interaction style with  
8 their children, children seemed to be “unaffected” by the parenting beliefs of their mothers. It  
9 could be that mothers with high interaction quality *and* high harsh parenting beliefs did not  
10 need to act upon their harsh parenting beliefs. Furthermore, it could be that children who were  
11 fortunate to have good quality interactions with their parents were encouraged to build up  
12 their own opinion with regard to parenting beliefs. This, in turn, could explain why these  
13 children did not simply adopt harsh parenting beliefs but develop a variety of parenting  
14 beliefs, independent of their parents’ beliefs.

15        On the other hand, poor maternal interaction quality led to an increased transmission in  
16 both directions: low as well as high maternal harsh parenting beliefs were transmitted to their  
17 children. It could be that poor interaction quality didn’t foster children to question and reflect  
18 on their mothers parenting beliefs, but lead to an unscrutinized taking over of their positions.

19        Contrary to our results, research on the transmission of values has found that warm  
20 parent-child relationships promote transmission processes on hedonistic values in mother-  
21 child dyads (Roest et al., 2009). Our study showed only a moderating effect of poor  
22 interaction quality in mother-child-dyads. In line with our results, this study found that  
23 transmission in father-child dyads did not increase with warmer family interactions.

24        Another explanation for our finding of transmission only being moderated in the mother-  
25 child dyad might be due to the fact that our investigation began in the early 1980s. At that

time, the roles of men and women were much more strongly prescribed than today in that mothers were expected to invest more heavily in the family than fathers. For our study, therefore, it would be reasonable to assume that mothers might have cultivated the quality of interaction with their child more strongly than fathers. Today, the father's role in the family interaction is changing; therefore, we assume that this is the reason why more recent research has found a moderating effect in father-child transmission processes (see e.g. Schönplflug, 2001). Only a few studies have compared transmission in mother-child and father-child dyads. For example, Smith and Farrington (2004) found fathers to pass on poor supervision to their children but not mothers. Similarly, Hofferth et al. (2012) found a direct association between G1 and G2 positive fathering. However, Simons et al. (1991) found the opposite results, namely, transmission of harsh parenting in mother-child but not in father-child dyads. Contrary to these studies, we found associations between childrens' and parents' harsh parenting beliefs for both dyads. Considering these inconsistent findings, future studies should more strongly emphasize the role of fathers in families and test for both maternal *and* paternal transmission, particularly with respect to poor parenting.

## **Limitations**

This study has several advantages compared to earlier studies that investigated the transmission of parenting. However, one limitation of this study includes the small sample size. First, we suspect that some of the non-significant results may be a result of low statistical power. Second, the small sample size did not allow us to interpret the results in a common model for fathers and mothers. To compare maternal and paternal transmission, future research should aim at integrating fathers and mothers in a common model. Finally, the limited sample size did not permit to separate the analyses for sons and daughters, though previous literature determined child's gender to be another potential moderator. Furthermore,



our findings revealed only quite small associations. Considering the long time span of over 20 years, however, small effects are usually regarded as relevant (Chen & Kaplan, 2001). Furthermore, we solely focused on *direct* transmission paths, excluding possible indirect transmission processes.

## Conclusion

In summary, this study contributes to the literature in several ways. We found clear associations between harsh parenting beliefs of parents and their children. Furthermore, we tested interaction quality as an important moderator of transmission processes.. We found that poor interaction quality in mother-child dyads fostered the transmission of both low and high maternal harsh parenting beliefs.

This study emphasizes an integrative view of family, investigating the role of both mothers and fathers in families. Future research in this field should always include fathers as their familial role has altered substantially since the 1980s. Thus, this study also contributes to a better understanding of intergenerational transmission processes of parenting beliefs in fathers and mothers and, has implications for researchers and practitioners working in the field of child development and family.

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